

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration and allowance of this application are respectfully requested. Currently, claims 1-34 are pending in this application.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §103:

Claims 1-34 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as allegedly being unpatentable over Shimizu et al (EP '423, hereinafter "Shimizu") in view of Kubo et al (U.S. '458, hereinafter "Kubo"). Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Kubo was filed in the U.S. Patent Office on December 4, 2000. Accordingly, Kubo is only effective as "prior art" as of its December 4, 2000 filing date. The present application is entitled to priority rights based on Japan application no. JP 2000-329026 which was filed on October 27, 2000 (i.e., before the December 4, 2000 filing date of Kubo).

As acknowledged in the Office Action, a certified copy of the priority document has been received by the USPTO. Attached is a verified English translation of the certified copy of the priority document and a statement that the translation is accurate.

Applicant therefore submits that Kubo does not qualify as "prior art" with respect to the present application. It is therefore not believed necessary at this time to discuss the technological deficiencies of this document and hence the combination of this document with Shimizu with respect to the present

MAKI et al.
Application No. 09/982,988
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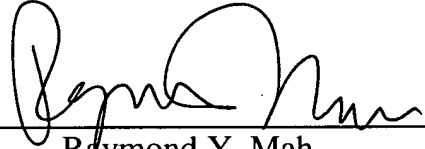
application. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that the rejection of claims 1-34 under 35 U.S.C. §103 be withdrawn.

Conclusion:

Applicant believes that this entire application is in condition for allowance and respectfully requests a notice to this effect. If the Examiner has any questions or believes that an interview would further prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

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